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The Cupper Visits... Lisa Salamone

By CHRIS PECK



Lisa Salamone

When Lisa Salamone ran an ad offering to cater a tea party she was just testing the water to see if anyone was interested. "The first day I had almost 10 phone calls. People said, 'Can you send me a brochure and I said, 'Oh sure,' and I didn't even have one," Salamone exclaims.

That was last spring. The Duxbury woman has since compiled 6 spring and summer menus on a brochure she designed on her home computer for her business, A Cup of Tea. The menus range from "A Classic English Tea" (the most popular) to "A children's Tea."

The Classic English includes scones with clotted cream and raspberry jam; tea sandwiches offering cucumber with mint butter and egg salad with English mustard; assorted tea cakes, fresh strawberries and Earl Grey or Darjeeling tea.

The children's Tea is quite different. It includes peanut butter and jam sandwiches; miniature frosted cupcakes with jelly beans; chocolate orange scones; miniature brownies; fruited teas and fruit punch.

The price ranges from \$14 to \$18 per person, depending on the number of people attending and servers needed. Salamone does the set up, serving and cleanup.

So far she has catered 5 tea parties, including 2 for children, and has scheduled 2 bridal shower teas. Her goal is to have a tea party once a week.

A former interior designer, Salamone brings more than a variety of tea leaves to her business. She has purchased sets of antique china, including teapots, and linens to create an elegant setting for her menus.

"I loved everything I saw and I had a budget so I had to be careful about what I purchased."

Some specialty items featured at her teas are white chocolate mints in the shape of teapots, cups and saucers and sugar cubes topped with edible flowers.

She has also provided a tray of tea, scones, sandwiches and cookies at Alexandra's European Skin Care Salon during their executive all-day beauty sessions.

The tea parties have been successful. But, there have been moments when Salamone's face probably looked as if it had been standing over the steam.

early parties and when she poured it, the loose tea leaves began spilling into the cups with the liquid.

"I didn't bring a strainer with me but the woman there said she had a clean knee-hi stocking that I could use. I did and it worked."

Salamone quickly notes this was a children's tea party so the faux pas was overlooked.

"That's how you learn," she offers in an embarrassed shrug, adding she has no intention of using that method again.

The children's tea parties are a treat for Salamone, the mother of an 18-year-old college coed.

"The kids are hysterical," she says. "The teas are so much fun for them." She recently catered a birthday party for an 11-year-old girl. "The girls all got dressed up and had hats on. They all held their pinkies up as they drank from the cup," she said.



Caterer Lisa Salamone of A Cup of Tea prepares for one of her elaborate tea parties.

"They wanted to know the proper etiquette. They wanted to be very ladylike and these are all girls who play softball."

Salamone said the girls asked the proper order to take the food and when she told them that they could take everything at the same time, they grabbed in one big bunch.

Before immersing herself in the tea party business, she did her homework, including a visit to Harney and Sons, tea masters in Salisbury, CT. She uses their fine selection of teas which are also featured at the Ritz Carlton.

She has attended a variety of teas at the Ritz and at the Empress Hotel on Victoria Island in Vancouver, Canada. She is planning a trip to England in November, and visiting 2 English tearooms. She has also studied the art of scones and English toppings, such as thick Devonshire cream.

Her own variety of tea menus include a Country Garden Tea; a Sweets Tea (all desserts); a Bridal Shower Tea and a Breakfast Tea.

She also offers tea gift baskets as part of her business, featuring loose tea and tea bags from Harney and from Taylors of Harrogate in England. The baskets will contain jams, creams and a cleverly shaped infuser.

Tips for Tea

The owner of a Cup of Tea, a catering and gift basket business, offers these tips for brewing better tasting tea.

1. Bring the water just to the boiling point, it should be 200 degrees otherwise it is too hot for the tea leaves.

2. Take some of the boiling water and pour it into the teapot, swishing it around the inside. This helps the pot retain the heat longer. A ceramic pot is recommended over a silver pot.

3. Use one teaspoon of tea per cup and put it right into the pot. Black tea should steep for 5 minutes and green tea for 3 minutes.

4. Use a strainer when pouring the tea.

She also advises adding water into the pot if it is left to steep after the tea has been poured so that the remaining tea will not become too strong.